

Loop 303 noise cranks up complaints

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Chuck Ullman says it sounds like someone is cranking up a gas lawnmower inside his Sun City West home when rush-hour traffic grinds nearby on Loop 303.

When Ullman discusses the noise, his voice betrays his anger.

At a recent Property Owners and Residents Association meeting in Sun City West, local transportation officials heard complaints from Ullman and other area residents about the noise. But residents were told the state will not install sound walls to breach the noise until 2011 or later, Ullman said, something the state is supposed to do whenever it routes freeway traffic and noise through existing communities.

Ullman criticized the state's current plan.

"Build it now, or we're stuck," Ullman said. "We're a senior community. How many of us are going to be around (in 2011)?"

Officials from Maricopa Association of Governments and Maricopa County Department of Transportation recommended that residents perturbed by noisy traffic draft a letter to state Department of Transportation officials and gather petition signatures on the matter.

Residents say the noise levels are not going to decrease.

Construction trucks and commuter vehicles rumble down Loop 303, a road that hugs the West Valley's outskirts as it alternates between a two-lane arterial and a semi-freeway. It runs from Interstate 10 at Cotton Lane north to Grand Avenue, and turns northeast to Lake Pleasant Road in north Peoria. Transportation plans show the freeway eventually connecting with Interstate 17 south of Carefree Highway.

Ullman said he could only imagine how loud traffic will be once I-10 and I-17 are linked by Loop 303.

State tests revealed morning and afternoon spikes in noise readings, but when ADOT officials averaged the findings taken throughout the day, the result was within state standards, said Eric Anderson, MAG's transportation director.

He had four suggestions on how residents should attack the issue to get sound barriers earlier than planned:

- Document noise levels.
- Analyze their future problem potential.
- Figure out how to fund the project ahead of schedule.
- Work with ADOT to lobby for earlier construction. This could amount to building a wall, or cutting a depression for Loop 303 to be placed in as it is expanded.

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